

MAJOR APPROACHES IN CONTEMPORARY PSYCHOLOGY: A COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS

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Abstract

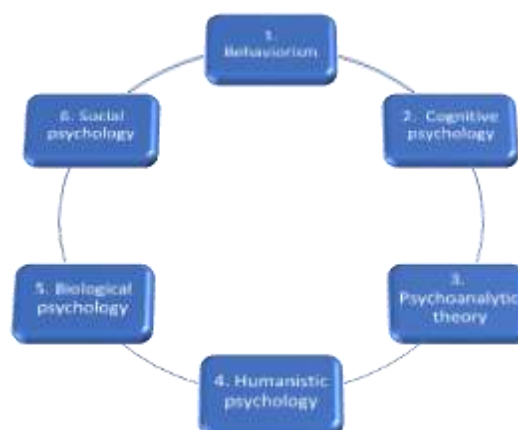
This article presents a clear overview of six major approaches in contemporary psychology: behaviorism, cognitive psychology, psychoanalytic theory, humanistic psychology, biological psychology, and social psychology. It explains their historical development, main principles, methods, and modern applications. The study shows how these approaches complement each other and why they remain important today.

Keywords: psychology, behaviorism, cognitive psychology, psychoanalytic theory, humanistic psychology, biological psychology, social psychology, mental processes, human behavior

Introduction

Psychology is a scientific field that studies human behavior and mental processes. Over time, psychologists have developed several major approaches to understand human nature. The six main modern approaches are:

Table 1:



approach focuses on different aspects of human behavior. Some study the brain, others study thoughts, emotions, or social influences. Understanding these approaches helps us see how psychology has developed and how different methods explain human behavior. This article provides a brief and clear analysis of each approach, showing their history, key ideas, research methods, strengths, and uses today.

Literature review: Historical development of the major approaches

Behaviorism

Behaviorism appeared in the early 20th century with Watson and Skinner. It focuses on observable behavior and believes that environment shapes actions. Behaviorism introduced scientific experiments into psychology and is still used in behavior therapy and education.

Cognitive Psychology

Cognitive psychology grew in the 1950s–1960s as a reaction to behaviorism. It studies mental processes such as memory, attention, language, and problem-solving. Neisser introduced the term “cognitive psychology.” Today, it works closely with neuroscience and artificial intelligence.

Psychoanalytic Theory

Founded by Freud, this approach studies the unconscious mind, early childhood experiences, personality development, and internal conflicts. Later theorists (such as Klein and Winnicott) expanded it. Modern psychodynamic approaches combine psychoanalytic ideas with neuroscience and attachment research.

Humanistic Psychology

Humanistic psychology began in the 1960s. Maslow and Rogers focused on personal growth, self-actualization, emotions, and positive human qualities. Humanistic ideas later influenced positive psychology, which studies well-being, happiness, and resilience.

Biological Psychology

This approach links psychology with the brain and body. It uses neuroscience, genetics, and physiology to study behavior. Modern tools such as neuroimaging and brain mapping help researchers understand emotions, memory, mental disorders, and brain plasticity.

Social Psychology

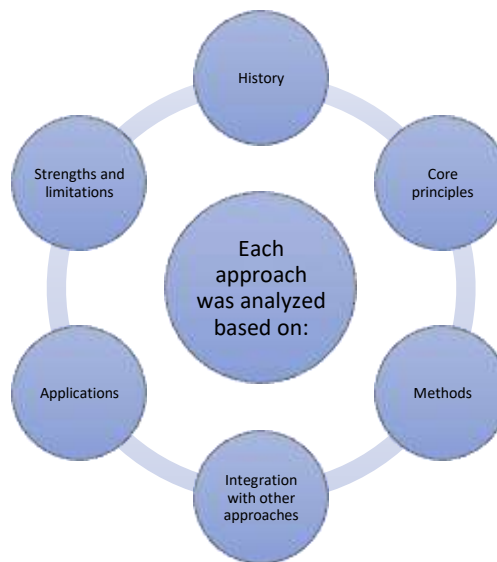
Developed in the early 20th century, social psychology studies how people think, feel, and behave in social situations. It examines social influence, prejudice, attitudes, and group behavior. Modern social psychology also considers culture.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study is based on a theoretical analysis and a review of literature. It includes:

- Primary sources: Classic works by Freud, Watson, Skinner, Maslow, Rogers, and others
- Secondary sources: Textbooks, review articles, and contemporary studies
- Empirical research: Recent findings from therapy, neuroscience, and social psychology

Table 2:



ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

1. Behaviorism

Main Idea: Human behavior is learned from the environment.

Methods: Experiments, conditioning, observation.

Applications: Behavior therapy/ Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA)/ Classroom management

Strength: Clear, scientific, and effective for behavior change.

Limitation: Does not explain thoughts, emotions, or creativity.

2. Cognitive Psychology

Main Idea: Behavior is influenced by thoughts, memory, attention, and mental processes.

Key Concepts:

- Working memory

- Long-term memory
- Decision-making
- Cognitive biases

Applications:

- Education and learning strategies
- Cognitive therapy
- Artificial intelligence models

Strength: Explains mental processes well.

Limitation: Sometimes ignores emotions and social factors.

3. Psychoanalytic Theory

Main Idea: Unconscious processes and early experiences shape personality.

Key Concepts:

- Defense mechanisms
- Childhood development
- Internal conflicts

Applications:

- Psychodynamic therapy
- Understanding trauma and attachment

Strength: Helps understand deep emotional problems.

Limitation: Hard to test scientifically.

4. Humanistic Psychology

Main Idea: People have free will and a natural desire to grow.

Key Concepts:

- Self-concept
- Self-actualization

- Empathy and positive regard

Applications:

- Counseling
- Positive psychology
- Education and personal development

Strength: Focuses on personal meaning and growth.

Limitation: Less scientific and harder to measure.

5. Biological Psychology

Main Idea: Behavior is influenced by the brain, genetics, and physiology

Key Topics:

- Neurotransmitters
- Brain structure
- Neuroplasticity

Applications:

- Treatment of mental disorders
- Neuroimaging research
- Rehabilitation after injuries

Strength: Strong scientific foundation.

Limitation: May ignore psychological and social factors.

CONCLUSION

Integration of Approaches

Modern psychology often combines several approaches. For example:

- Health psychology uses biological, psychological, and social factors (biopsychosocial model).
- Developmental psychology uses psychoanalytic, cognitive, and biological theories.

- Clinical psychology uses cognitive-behavioral, humanistic, and psychodynamic methods.

Integration gives a fuller understanding of human behavior.

The six major approaches in psychology offer different but complementary ways to understand human behavior and mental processes. Each approach has unique strengths:

- Behaviorism provides clear methods for behavior change.
- Cognitive psychology explains how people think and learn.
- Psychoanalytic theory helps understand deep emotional processes.
- Humanistic psychology focuses on personal growth.
- Biological psychology explains brain-behavior connections.
- Social psychology shows how society influences people.

Modern psychology benefits from combining these perspectives. Future research should continue to integrate methods, include cultural diversity, and use new scientific technologies.

Psychology remains important for understanding and improving human life, from mental health to education, social relations, and well-being.

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